

A helpful tool for fruit crop pest control



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Extension Spotlight

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The variety of fruit crops grown in Douglas County and Western Oregon is a treat for all of us. The local fruit season usually begins with strawberries, goes to blueberries, cherries, raspberries, plums, peaches, blackberries, table grapes, prunes, Asian pears, pears, apples, and wine grapes. And that doesn't include all the native berry plants that are fun to harvest, from huckleberries, to Oregon grape, blackberries, salal, and elderberry. Oregonians are able to harvest fruit quite continuously from the end of May until November.

Douglas County is a great place to raise fruit crops. We have dry, sunny summer days to minimize plant disease and maximize photosynthesis, while mild enough to grow a wide variety of fruit. In most years, we have enough winter rainfall to recharge groundwater and snowpack to supply the Umpqua River for our irrigation needs. Unfortunately, during the past 10-15 years, we have seen a trend toward milder winter weather with fewer subfreezing temperatures. This milder weather pattern has allowed greater survival of many types of insect pests. The Spotted Wing Drosophila vinegar fly and the Brown Marmorated Stink Bug are two pest responsible for doing a dramatic



Erin Saylor picks Rainier cherries at James Orchard in Green on in 2017.

MICHAEL SULLIVAN/NEWS-REVIEW FILE PHOTO

amount of damage to cherry, blueberry, raspberry and grape crops in Oregon. There are many other native and invasive insect pests that are ever ready to damage our food crops.

There is good news for gardeners and farmers that agricultural researchers have developed trapping systems that utilize insect pheromones. These pheromones are sex attractants specific to each species of insect and will lure them to sticky traps. Once stuck in these traps, farmers or gardeners can count the number of each target insect to know if there are enough of

them to treat the crop with a protectant. The beauty of this system is that you do not need to use agricultural chemicals unless pest numbers are greater than the established thresholds. These lures and trapping systems can be purchased locally at farm stores or direct from the lure manufacturers. Just look online for insect monitoring systems or pheromone traps for sale.

I use pheromone traps to monitor for codling moths in apples, pears, plums, and walnuts. I also use traps for filbertworm in hazelnuts, cucumber beetles in cucumber,

pumpkins or squash, and raspberry crown borers in the caneberry patch. There are dozens of effective lures each for specific crop plant pests and each pest will have a slightly different type of trap that works best at catching them. So go online and learn more about pheromone lures and trapping systems or come by the OSU Extension office to visit with the Master Gardeners and me. During spring and summer, I maintain the "Weekly Pest Alerts" report that is available on the horticulture web page of Douglas County OSU

Extension Service. This report reviews topics including current plant diseases, insect trap counts, recommendations and reminders for growing tree fruits, nuts and berries. Check out the web page to learn more.

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